

Statement of Don Berthiaume, Kensington, MD

As an initial matter, according to Montgomery County's COVID portal website, 95% of county residents have received their first dose of the vaccine and 85% have received their second dose. Consequently, there is zero necessity for a vaccine passport.

Second, adopting a vaccine passport is state sanctioned discrimination, in that the state, in this case Montgomery County, is directing private citizens to discriminate against citizens who are not vaccinated. This likely violates the Constitution's equal protection clause in the 14th Amendment. Any discrimination, whether based on race, gender, sexual identity, or vaccination status is terrible. If we allow discrimination here, it opens the door to future discrimination.

Third, the prevailing argument for the vaccine passport is that it will slow or stop the spread of COVID. This is untrue. COVID spreads regardless of vaccination status and the available data proves this. Look at Montgomery County. 85% of this county is fully vaccinated, yet we had a COVID explosion in January. This was not the fault of 15% of the population. It is the result of a highly transmissible virus from which the vaccine does not provide full immunity; the vaccine reduces symptoms.

Fourth, I suspect that this Council is not using the vaccine passport to stop or slow the spread of COVID. Instead, I believe that this Council wants to issue a vaccine mandate, but knows that it does not have the authority to do so. Instead, it wants to force a mandate by using the passport as a cudgel to force 15% of the population to get vaccinated (likely 5%, since 95% of the county has had dose 1).

Finally, if one chooses to not get vaccinated, they are accepting the risk that their symptoms may be worse than those who are vaccinated. But, that is their choice. Their decision to not get vaccinated has zero impact on those that are vaccinated.

I implore this county and those who are pushing this to reconsider their position. While the impact on those who are vaccinated is arguably negligible, the broader impact of this is potentially dangerous. The next time, it might be a passport or other mandate requiring citizens to do something they do not want to do and the Council will simply point to this precedent as justification for its actions. True leaders know when not to abuse their powers; tyrants refuse to yield power and always seek more even when it is unnecessary.